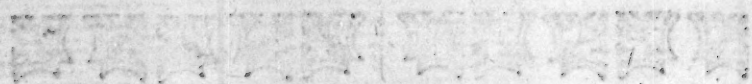




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5
The sources of corrupting both Natural and
Revealed Religion, exemplified in the Ro-
mish doctrine of PENANCE and PIL-
GRIMAGES.

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S E R M O N

Preached at

SALTERS-HALL,

February 27, 1734-5.

By *JEREMIAH HUNT*, D.D.



L O N D O N :

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M DCC XXXV.

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Revealed Religion, exemplified in the
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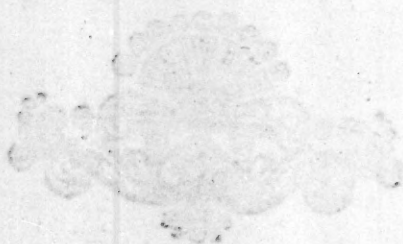
SERMON

Preached at

SALTHERS-HALL

February 25, 1745

By JEREMIAH HENRY, D.D.




LONDON:

Printed for T. Cotes, at the Angel in the Strand.



MARK vi. 12.

*And they went out, and preach'd
that men should repent.*

I.  HE design or view of the principles both of natural and reveal'd religion is to bring us to the steady and constant practice of sincere piety and real virtue. Under these are comprehended a due regulation of the propensities we find in our make to pleasures of sense, interest and honour; by the practice of sobriety, temperance, purity, moderation, and humility: a proper government of the passions, and particularly of fear, by a rational courage, and a well-directed fortitude of mind; and of undue resentment and anger, by meekness and long-suffering: a uniform and steady care not to infringe

fringe any of the rights of others, of which a liberty to judge for ones self in matters of religion, which is unalienable, is not of the least importance: a sincere and undissembled love of mankind, attended with all the proper instances of goodness, whereby their miseries may be lessen'd, and their true happiness promoted: finally, a supreme love of the one true and living God, to whom all conceivable perfections belong, and whose goodness is diffus'd through all the works of his hands; a due fear and reverence of him; a careful and constant imitation of those perfections, which are capable of being transcribed by us into temper and life; a fervent and steddy addressing our prayers and praises to him; a constant regard to him, by taking him into our view, especially when we form any important designs, refering all events to his disposal, submitting in every thing to his will, expressing ever an unshaken dependance upon him, and whenever we deviate in the least from any of his commands, returning without delay to our duty.

The steddy and persevering practice of all these virtues is the great and ultimate

mate design of the principles of truth, which reason, duly cultivated, without the assistance of revelation, is capable of discovering. And without such a practice, a profession of the clearest and most indisputable truths of natural religion, namely, the existence of God, the perfections which are to be ascribed to him, his providence, the difference of actions, and a future state, will be of no significance to our true happiness.

To the same end are revealed truths directed, as means, and motives; and without attaining that end are alike insignificant. Hence it is that the patriarchs, to whom God expressed particular and distinguish'd favours, are describ'd as *walking with God, pleasing him, and being righteous in their generation*. And on that account their worship and sacrifices were accepted, and for the failure thereof *Cain* and his offering were rejected.

When God set up a polity among the *Jews* to secure them from idolatry, and the vices which attended it, and for that purpose wisely injoin'd numerous rites; many of them paid such deference to the ritual and ceremonial laws, as to disregard the moral. To reclaim them God sent

sent at several times prophets, who declared to them in his name, that their sacrifices and oblations, their washings and purifications, their feasts and solemn assemblies, their fasts and severest humiliations, were so far from being acceptable in his sight, if not accompanied with the practice of universal righteousness and charity; that on the contrary without those virtues, these very rites, tho' of his own institution, were the greatest abomination in his sight. * *To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. Wash ye, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes, cease to do evil, learn to do well, seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Then, tho' your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; tho' they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. And again: † Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow my self before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year*

* II. I. 11, 16, 17, 18.

† Mic. VI. 6, 7, 8.

old?

old? Will the Lord be pleas'd with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good: and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

When the kingdom of the *Messiah* approach'd, *John*, his forerunner, was sent by God to preach and exhort his hearers to quit every course of vice, and ingage in the practice of every virtue, as the best preparatory to enter into that kingdom, in which eternal and immutable righteousness should be chiefly and ultimately recommended.

Jesus, the *Messiah*, appears, and calls those of his own nation to a change of heart and life; assures them, that their righteousness must be sincere and inward, exceeding that of the scribes and pharisees, or they should in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven; opens to them in the clearest and most extensive manner the duties of sincere piety, and real virtue; and tells them, that whosoever would hear and practice them, he

B

would

would * liken him to a wise man, who built his house upon a rock; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock. On the contrary, saith he, Every one that beareth these sayings of mine, and doth them not, shall be likened to a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it. The same doctrine was taught by the apostles, who by him were equally appointed to be the foundation, upon which the Christian church was built, † Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone. * The grace of God, saith St. Paul, that bringeth salvation to all men, hath appear'd, teaching us, that denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. In this sense the phrase || sound doctrine is us'd, and the gospel is call'd ‡ The doctrine, which is according to godliness.

II. But the practice of sincere piety and extensive morality, becoming diffi-

* Mat. VII. 24, — 27. † Eph. II. 20. * Tit. II. 11. || 1 Tim. I. 10. Tit. I. 9. ‡ 1 Tim. VI. 3.

cult, through the indulgence of irregular appetites, and inordinate affections, many (too many, God knows) in every age have contriv'd more easy ways, and endeavour'd to reconcile their criminal inclinations and conduct with the expectation of the favour of God, and of receiving rewards from him. Give me leave to call these *substitutes*; since they are put in the room of religious virtue, or real reformation and amendment. Now persons in power observing such bad dispositions in the populace, made the best use of them they could, to carry on their political views, and ambitious designs. In the most early times the characters of king and priest were united in one person, but afterwards those offices were placed in different hands. And then princes thought it proper, when their views of state made it necessary, to use the priests as tools to promote their designs; and the priests, by way of recompence for their services, gain'd unjust and exorbitant powers; while the people, who shar'd in the corruption, looked on with no small satisfaction. Thus the pure religion of nature became depraved. * *Varro* therefore, a

* Vid. *Aug. De Civit. Dei*, l. vi. c. 5.

learned Roman, distinguished the mythic and political from the natural religion taught by the philosophers, who recommended virtue, and the imitation of deity, and on that account met with unkind and cruel treatment. *Socrates* for opposing established corruptions had a cup of poison put into his hand ; which made *Plato*, his scholar, go into prudentials, and be upon the reserve.

The false prophets, who sprung up under the Mosaic institution, were led by the same corrupt principles. Thus we are told by the sacred historian, that
** The king of Israel gathered the prophets together, about four hundred men, and said unto them ; Shall I go against Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall I forbear ? And they said, consulting rather the inclination of the king, than truth, Go up ; for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king. And Jehosaphat said : Is there not here a prophet of the Lord besides, that we might inquire of him ? And the king of Israel said unto Jehosaphat : There is yet one man (Micaiah the son of Imlah) by whom we may inquire of the Lord ; but I hate him, for he doth not*

* 1 Kings, XXII. 6, &c.

prophecy good concerning me, but evil. He however sent a messenger to him, who when he came to Micaiah, address'd him thus: Behold now, the words of the prophets declare good unto the king with one mouth; let thy word, I pray thee, be like the word of one of them, and speak that which is good. And Micaiah said: As the Lord liveth, what the Lord saith unto me, that will I speak. Which accordingly the prophet did. And what was the consequence? Thus saith the king: Put this fellow in the prison, and feed him with bread of affliction, and with water of affliction, until I come in peace again. And in like manner the prophet Isaiah: * Now go, write it before them in a table, that this is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the Lord; which say to the seers, see not; and to the prophets, prophecy not to us right things; speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits. A strong and lively description of the source of religious corruptions! Again: † I have seen also in the prophets of Jerusalem an horrible thing: they commit adultery; and walk in lies, they strengthen also the hands

* II. XXX. 8, 9, 10. † Jer. XXIII. 14, 16, 17.
Jer. V. 31.

of evil-doers, that none doth return from his wickedness. Thus saith the Lord of hosts: Hearken not unto the words of the prophets, that prophesy unto you, they make you vain. They say still unto them, who despise me, the Lord hath said ye shall have peace; and they say unto every one, that walketh after the imagination of his own heart, no evil shall come upon thee. By these passages, to which many others might be added of the same nature, we may see clearly, what gave rise under the dispensation of the law to the corrupting the religion of God, and by what principles this was effected.

Our Saviour cautions the people, who attended his instructions, to * beware of false prophets; and supposing their capacity of judging, lays down a rule to distinguish them. *They come in sheep's clothing, the dress of the ancient prophets; but inwardly they are ravenous wolves, led on by the lusts of power and interest they are desirous of making a prey of you. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? The same character of grievous wolves, Paul, the*

* Mat. VII. 15.]

apostle of the Gentiles, * gives of the false apostles, and judaizing teachers : to whom also *Peter*, the apostle of the circumcision, † probably refers.

And since the representation of what the scripture saith of these corrupters of Christianity, will afford us a clear and distinct view of the spring and motives of corrupting the religion of God, give me leave in a larger manner to attempt it. When the first professors of the Christian doctrine were exposed for the sake of it to many sufferings, occasion'd by the unbelieving Jews, the false apostles endeavour'd, as an expedient to save themselves from persecution, to mingle Judaism and Christianity together. || *As many, saith St. Paul, as make a fair shew in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcis'd, only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. For neither they themselves, who are circumcis'd, keep the law; but desire to have you circumcis'd, that they may glory in your flesh.* That the expedient was effectual, appears from what he had said before : ‡ *And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, then is the offence of the cross ceased.* To gain favour with the

* Acts XX. 29, 30. † 2 Pet. II. 1. || Gal. VI. 12, 13. ‡ Gal. V. 11.

unbelieving Gentiles, these false and deceitful workers taught the Christians, that it was lawful to eat things sacrific'd to idols even in their temples. * *I have a few things against thee [the church of Pergamos] because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols.* From the same intention of ingratiating themselves with the enemies of Christianity, they introduc'd worshiping of angels. † *Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility, and worshiping of angels; intruding into those things, which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up in his fleshly mind.* || And from the same motive they denied the resurrection; and colour'd over this their error, by saying: *That ‡ the resurrection was past already.* And to strengthen farther their interest, they took the part, which all corrupters of true religion have ever done, and taught licentious doctrines; which is a method extremely pleasing to corrupt men, who dislike sincere piety, and extensive virtue. Such men * *will not indure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, hav-*

* Rev. II. 24, 20. † Col. II. 18. || 1 Cor. XV.
 ‡ 2 Tim. II. 18. * 2 Tim. IV. 3. 2. Pet. II. 18.

ing itching ears, that want to be sooth'd,
 and they shall turn away their ears from
 the truth. To gratifie these they taught,
 that fornication was lawful. † Thou suf-
 ferest the woman Jezabel, who calleth her-
 self a prophetess, to teach, and seduce my ser-
 vants to commit fornication. † They crept
 into houses,, and led captive silly women, la-
 den with sins, and led away with diverse lusts.
 Of these St. Jude saies, † That there were
 certain men crept in unawares, turning the
 grace of God into lasciviousness, and denying
 the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.
 These corrupters of pure Christianity were
 influenc'd by views of ease, interest, and
 ambition: || teaching things, which they ought
 not, for filthy lucre's sake: * whose belly was
 their God, and who minded earthly things.
 Of these the apostle Paul speaks, when he
 saies: † For ye suffer, if a man bring you in-
 to bondage, if a man devour you, if a man
 take of you, if a man exalt himself, if a man
 smite you on the face. They set up through
 pride and insolence for apostles, tho' they
 wanted the characters of such. † And thou
 hast tried them, who say, they are apostles,
 and are not; and hast found them liars.
 And when they wanted real piety, to co-
 ver their interested and ambitious designs,

† Rev. II. 20. † 2 Tim. III. 6. † v. 4. || Tit. I. 11.
 * Phil. III. 19. † 2 Cor. II. 20. † Rev. II. 2.

they put on specious shews, and † *transform'd themselves into angels of light.*

From this representation of the Jewish false apostles, one would imagine there should not arise any other, who should out-do them in cunning craftiness, and artifices of deceit. And yet the apostle *Paul* by a prophetic spirit tells us, *that day* (namely, of the coming of our Lord) should be preceded by an apostacy from the pure and simple doctrine of Christianity, which was to proceed gradually, till united under one head, and || *the man of sin should be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth, and exalteth himself above all that is call'd God, or that is worshiped, that is, above all magistrates, who are call'd Gods, and even the imperial dignity; so that he as a God siteth in the temple of God, under the pretence of being the head of the church, which is the prerogative of Christ alone; laying claim to exorbitant temporal power, contrary to the nature of Christ's kingdom, which is not of this world.*

III. Having trac'd through the history of scripture the sources of corrupting true religion, and shewn that flatter-

† 2 Cor. XI. 14. || 2 Thes. II. 3, 4, &c.

ing the deprav'd taste of wicked men, who would reconcile criminal inclinations and vicious behaviour with the hope of divine favour and future happiness, from interested and ambitious views, has given rise to such corruptions: let us now see, whether the unscriptural doctrines (by which are meant, either the opinions, which appear contrary to scripture; or which have no scripture to found them upon, and are additions to it) which the church of *Rome* entertains, are not calculated to the same corrupt views.

Is it not apparent, that the undue claim the pope makes to be universal head of the Christian world, and successor to an apostle, must spring from interested and aspiring prospects? How does it flatter the ambition of a priest to have the people believe, that contrary to sense, reason, and scripture, after he has pronounc'd the words of consecration, the bread and wine should be changed into the real body and blood of Christ, together with his soul and divinity? Is it not calculated to serve worldly designs, that the pope should issue out indulgences? What other views than interest, and heaping up a prodigious mass of wealth, could give rise to the fictitious doctrine of purgato-

ry? Is it not with the same view, that voluntary oblations to shrines, as well as those which have been injoin'd by way of penance, have been encouraged? Does it not flatter the vanity and pride of the priest, that in receiving the eucharist there is a sacred difference put between him and the laity, when the laity receive but in one kind? What church has furnish'd to corrupt men so many equivalents of real piety and virtue, with delusive assurances of pardon, as the church of *Rome*? May it not be justly said, that whatever claim they have to the character of a true church, they have all the marks of a corrupt one? When repentance, which signifies change of mind and conduct, is recommended, the papists think proper to use the expression of *doing penance*; that the votaries of their church may never loose the view of the power of the priest in absolving, and of an easier way of obtaining pardon by private fastings, saying *pater-nosters*, and *ave-maries*, than by real and extensive virtue.

But since it is proper more particularly to consider the popish doctrines of penance and pilgrimages, by which I mean
here,

here, what are injoin'd by the priest: give me leave first to represent them to you; and then shew, that these are not built upon any firm or solid foundation, tho' they are admirably fitted to promote the corrupt views of that church.

1. The papists define penance to be "A
 " sacrament, consisting in some outward
 " sign or ceremony, by which grace is
 " given to the soul of the worthy recei-
 " ver, instituted by Christ, when breath-
 " ing upon his disciples he gave them
 " the Holy Ghost, to remit and retain
 " sins, that is, to reconcile the faithful
 " fallen into sin after baptism. It differ-
 " eth from baptism not only in the mat-
 " ter and form, but also because the mi-
 " nister of baptism is not a judge in
 " that ordinance; whereas after baptism
 " the sinner presents himself before the
 " tribunal of the priest as guilty, to be
 " set at liberty by his sentence. It is
 " however as necessary as baptism. The
 " form consists in the words, *I do absolve*
 " *thee*. Contrition, confession, and satis-
 " faction are parts of penance, and the
 " effect of it is reconciliation with God.
 " Contrition is grief of mind for sin com-
 " mitted,

" mited, with purpose to sin no more,
 " and was ever necessary at all times;
 " but in such, as sin after baptism, it is
 " a preparation to remission of sins, be-
 " ing join'd with a purpose to do what-
 " soever else is requir'd for the lawful
 " receiving of this sacrament. By pe-
 " nance the church hath ever under-
 " stood, that Christ hath instituted the
 " intire confession of sins, as necessary
 " by the law of God, to those, who fall
 " after baptism. For having instituted
 " the priests, his vicars, for judges of all
 " mortal sins, it is certain that they can-
 " not exercise this judgment without
 " knowledge of the cause; nor observe
 " equity in imposing punishment, if the
 " sins be not particularly made known
 " unto them, and not in general only.
 " But when this is done, the priest, who
 " hath authority delegate or ordinary
 " over the penitent, remits his sins by
 " a judicial act. And the greater priests
 " reserve to themselves some faults more
 " grievous, as does the pope; and there
 " is no doubt, but that every bishop may
 " do it in his diocess; and this reserva-
 " tion is of force before God. It has been
 " allways observ'd in the church, that in
 " the hour of death any priest may ab-
 " solve

“ solve any penitent from any sin. Satisfactions imposed by the priest” viz. of saying so many *pater-nosters* and *ave-maries*, of lacerating their bodies by severe scourgings, of going barefoot to the shrine of some saint, &c. which are too well known, to require an exact description, “ are made necessary; since it is not convenient, that the offender should be too easily received into grace; and it is proper he should be like to Christ, who suffering punishments, did satisfy for us, from whom our satisfactions also receive force, as offered by him to the Father, and received by his intercession”†.

To this their doctrine of satisfactions it may not be improper to add, that the confessors often change severer penances into certain sums of money, which they exact; and teach, that attrition alone, which, as they define it, is a grief for sin arising either from shame, or from a fear of hell, will be sufficient for obtaining pardon. * A late popish writer farther tells us, that “ since under the law in case of leprosy, to which sin may fitly enough be compar’d, the leprous per-

* Vid. *Conc. Trid. Sess. dec. quartâ.*

* See *A profession of Catholick faith*, 1734.

“son was pronounced clean by the priest;
 “it is no way unreasonable, that the Chri-
 “stian priest should have a power to
 “absolve.” To which he adds, that “this
 “doctrine is taught by our church,” and
 cites the following passage. “Our Lord
 “Jesus Christ, who hath left power to
 “his church to absolve all sinners, who
 “truly repent and believe in him, of his
 “great mercy forgive thee thine offen-
 “ces; and by his authority committed to
 “me, I absolve thee from all thy sins, in
 “the name of the Father, Son, and of the
 “Holy Ghost.

2. I proceed now to shew, that these
 doctrines of penance and pilgrimages
 are not built upon any firm and solid foun-
 dation; tho’ they are admirably fitted to
 promote the corrupt views of the church
 of *Rome*.

The main foundation, upon which
 the doctrine of penance is built, is the
 suppos’d authority, which Christ is ima-
 gin’d to invest the priests with in these
 texts: * *And when he had said this, he
 breathed on them, and saith unto them:
 Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose soever sins*

* John XX. 22.

ye remit, they are remited to them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retain'd: † Verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven: I shall endeavour therefore, with the utmost care I can, to give you the true meaning of these passages.

As to the first, it will be necessary to inquire, who the persons are, to whom the text refers. They are call'd the *disciples*, * *who in the evening were assembled for fear of the Jews*. If by the term *disciples* we are to take in the hundred and twenty, † this interpretation will not favour the popish doctrine; which restrains the power of retaining or remitting sins to the priests only; and denounces an *anathema* against such, who assert, that absolution is not a judicial, but a ministerial act, to declare the remission of sins to the believing penitent. But the words plainly refer to the apostles, of whom alone it can be said with propriety, *as my father sent me, even so send I you*, or will send you in a little time, when the spirit shall be poured out. As a token of which he || *breathed upon them, and saith unto them: Receive*

† Mat. XVIII. 18. * Joh. XX. 19. † Acts I. 15. ||

ye the Holy Ghost. In the 24th verse it is said, that *Thomas, one of the twelve call'd Didymus, was not with them, when Jesus came:* and it follows, *the other disciples therefore,* that is, the rest of the apostles, *told him, that they had seen the Lord.* It appears then evident, that the privilege of remitting or retaining sins, mentioned in this text, relates to the apostles only; who were to be sent out by Christ himself, after they were furnished with the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit for that purpose, to preach every where the doctrine of repentance and remission of sins; and to whom was communicated the power of inflicting, or removing diseases. And I know not how any bishop or priest can lay claim to an authoritative power of remitting or retaining sins from this text, unless he can prove his succession to the apostolic character. Permit me then to show the scripture-characters of an apostle, whereby it will clearly appear, that the pretension, to be a proper successor to an apostle, is as groundless, as it is arrogant.

* *Am I not an apostle? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?* The apostles being chosen to be witnesses of the resurrection,

* 1 Cor. IX. 1.

it was requisite that St. *Paul*, being call'd to that office, should also see him risen. Hence *Ananias* speaks thus to him: † *The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest see the just one, and shouldest hear the words of his mouth; for thou shalt be his witness to all men, of what thou hast seen and heard.* Accordingly we find that Christ was seen of him: || *And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.* This St. *Paul* saies, as not having seen Christ, of whom he was to testify, till after his conversion, and our Lords ascension; as the rest of the apostles had. ‡ *And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.* On this account when the vacant apostleship of *Judas* was to be filled up, care was taken that it should be by one, who had accompanied with the disciples all the time that the Lord *Jesus* went in and out among them, beginning from the baptism of *John* unto that same day, that he was taken up from them; because he was, by being chosen to be an apostle, ordain'd to be a witness of Christ's resurrection.

Another character of an apostle was,

† Acts XXII. 14. || 1 Cor. XV. 8. ‡ John XV. 27.

that from the abundance of extraordinary gifts imparted to him by the effusion of the Spirit, he was empower'd for the confirming and spreading the Gospel to communicate some degrees of the gifts of the Holy Spirit to others by imposition of hands.

** Now when the apostles, which were at Jerusalem, heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John, two apostles; who when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus) Then they laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost. And when Simon saw, that through laying on of the apostles hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money.*

It was peculiar to an apostle to inflict upon remarkable offenders, in the first settlement of the kingdom of the Messiah, such extraordinary corporal punishments, as might be a terror to others, by the direction and influence of the Holy Ghost. Instances of this we have in the death inflicted by St. Peter on *Ananias* and *Sapphira*: † in the blindness inflicted by St.

* Acts VIII. 14--17. † Acts V. 10.

Paul on *Elymas*, || and his delivery of *Hymeneus* and *Alexander* unto Satan, that they might learn not to blaspheme.*

To the apostles was given by the Spirit the word of † *wisdom*; by which term in many places the whole scheme of the Christian doctrine is express'd. And therefore to them only, as design'd to be the foundation, on which the Christian faith, worship, and practice should be built, by the illumination of the Spirit, was imparted a full and comprehensive view of the dispensation of the Gospel. They by revelation opened, wherein the pardon of sin consisted, namely in removing the punishment, that was the reveal'd sanction of infringing the divine law, which was death, by a resurrection to eternal life; set in a clear and full light the terms, upon which this blessing would be confer'd, either by innocence, or since that does not appear to be attainable by us in this corrupt and deprav'd state, sincere and steady (tho' not perfect and faultless) obedience; and at the same time assured us, that if these conditions were not complied with, a second death would be in-

|| Acts XIII. 11. * 1 Tim. I. 20. See 1 Cor. V. 5.
† 1 Cor. XII. 8, 28.

licted, and that Christ, who is appointed by the Father to be the judge of all, will ratify the doctrine of the apostles communicated to them by revelation, in dispensing rewards and punishments agreeably to it.

To bring this part of the argument to a point : Since the text under examination plainly refers to the apostles ; and the characters laid down in the scripture of an apostle are such, that neither the bishop of *Rome*, nor any other, can justly pretend to ; it follows, that a grant made to the apostles cannot fairly and reasonably be claim'd by any bishop, or priest whatsoever ; and that this text must be given up, as insufficient, to support what is built upon it, *viz.* the authoritative power of a priest, as judge on a tribunal, to absolve.

But it may be there is greater force in the other text, which is brought to support the popish doctrine of penance
** Verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven.* Let us therefore carefully consider it. And in order to this, give me leave to set before you a brief para-

* Mat. XVIII. 18.

phrase of the preceding part of the chapter. The disciples at this time forming expectations of Christ's erecting a glorious kingdom upon earth, began to contest who should be greatest in that kingdom; till at last *Jesus* taking notice of the dispute, set a little child before them and said: There is a wide difference between the kingdom of God, and the kingdoms of this present world; men shall not there be exalted, as they are here, by striving for superiority; but they shall be esteem'd only by their humility and freedom from ambitious regards to the things of the world, such as are the qualities of this little child. Whosoever therefore shall come nearest to the unaffected humility of this little child, shall be greatest in the kingdom of heaven; and he that without respect to temporal considerations shall receive and encourage such an humble person shall be rewarded, as if he had entertain'd me. On the contrary, he that shall despise, injure, or offend any of these humble persons, who believe in me; better were it for him, that he had quickly perished by some violent death. Such indeed is the state of things, and the wickedness of men, that offences will happen, and the providence of God for wise reasons may permit them. But we be to
that

that man, by whose fault they shall come to pass. It may perhaps be a difficult precept to men of some dispositions to avoid them: but if any thing as dear to them as a right hand or right eye be the occasion of injuring one of these little ones, it is much better to part with it, whatever difficulty may attend doing so, than incur the eternal displeasure of God. Take heed that ye despise not one of the meanest of my disciples, for whom God has so great a concern, as to send his angels from his own immediate presence to minister unto him: nay for whose salvation God has thought fit to have sent his son into the world, and whose recovery is pleasing to the father; as a shepherd has sensible joy, when he finds one of his sheep, which had gone astray. If therefore thy brother sin, or commit a trespass against thee; use all prudent means to recover him. First, tell him privately of his fault, between thee and him alone; and if he thereby be persuaded to amend, thou hast gain'd thy purpose, and saved thy brother. But if he reject thy private admonition, then take with thee two or three other persons; that by the authority of these witnesses he may be convinced, and prevail'd with to repent. But if this method also prove ineffectual to reform

reform him, then tell thy case to the church; and if he still be so obstinate, as not to be influenced by public reproof, you have done your duty, and you may have no more to do with him in a way of friendship and familiarity. Verily I say unto you, * whatsoever injury or trespass, taking these prudent methods which I have laid down, ye shall bind on your offending and incorrigible brother on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever trespass ye shall loose on earth, by reducing the offender to repentance, in the use of the rules I have before prescribed, and entitling him, agreeably to my doctrine, to your forgiveness, shall be loosed in heaven. Upon this *Peter* ask'd, how oft his brother might sin against him, and he be obliged upon his repenting to forgive him. Now upon this interpretation, which appears agreeable to the whole of Christ's discourse here, what foundation is there for the authority of the priest alone to forgive; especially when there is not the least mention made of the priest in the whole paragraph?

Having thus overturn'd the foundation,

d Vid. *Grot. in loc.*

E

upon

upon which from scripture they build the doctrines of penance and injoin'd pilgrimages, the superstructures, as, that penance is a sacrament; and the exorbitant powers, which are supposed to be given to the priests; must of course fall, in the opinion of protestants, whose religion is scripture alone. But when the writers of the church of *Rome* from the purest antiquity shall produce testimonies to prove the doctrine of penance, as it is represented in the council of *Trent*, to be most antient, it will be no difficult task to make a reply. The argument which a late writer uses, taken from the priests pronouncing under the law the leprous person clean, is rather an illustration than a proof. However since it is borrowed from the law of *Moses*, which we gentile Christians were never under, and which is now abrogated, it can never be regarded as conclusive. And whereas the same author sais, that their doctrine is allowed by the church of *England*, I leave them to answer, who are more nearly concerned in it, than I am.

By what has been offer'd, I think it plainly appears, that the popish doctrines of penance and enjoin'd pilgrimages are not built upon any firm and solid foundation

dation; however they are admirably fitted to promote corrupt views. What can more gratify the ambition of a priest, than to make his authoritative sentence necessary to the forgiving mortal sins. The words which I refer to are these: * " And tho' contrition be sometimes join'd with charity, and reconcileth a man to God before the receiving of the sacrament; yet this virtue cannot be ascribed to it, without purpose to receive the sacrament of penance." What could create a greater dependance of the people upon the pope, or bishop of a diocese, which suits exactly with ambitious aims; than that they should reserve to themselves some more grievous faults, and that this reservation should be of force before God? And since corrupt men, finding they want a settled habit of religious virtue, are desirous of something in the lieu of it, upon which they may form the hope of future happiness; what more readily occurs to such, than extraordinary appearances of devotion, severe scourgings, and pilgrimages to the shrine of some saint; and private fastings; which because not commanded, they apprehend will be sooner accepted, as equivalents of real and ex-

* Vid. *Cont. Trid. ibid.*

tensive virtue, which they see will put
 them to more difficulty to attain. But
 how delusive are such sentiments! It is the
 excellency of the Christian doctrine, that
 the institutions, which are enjoind in it,
 are few and simple; that they who profess
 it might with greater clearness see, that
 the last design of it is to bring us to sin-
 cere piety and real virtue. And can any
 imagine, that introducing such unscriptu-
 ral practices, as bad men may and do take
 as *substitutes*, and which are contrary to the
 wise and excellent simplicity of the Chri-
 stian religion, can be pleasing and grateful
 to the author of it? Can we suppose, that
 a being of unlimited goodness can be
 pleas'd with the severe pains, that any of
 his reasonable creatures voluntarily inflict
 upon themselves, for their own sake? and
 if not, why are they undergone? The rea-
 son is plain: because the enduring them
 for a little time is much more easy, than
 a constant regulation of our appetites and
 passions, a steady practice of piety, and
 universal righteousness and beneficence;
 and yet these are necessary to make us like
 to God, who is invariably holy; to render
 us subjects capable of future happiness, and
 to attemper us to heaven, which is to be
 considered by us as a state, as well as a
 place. How dangerous then must it be to
 lead

lead sinners into a false and groundless expectation of the favor of God and eternal life upon expressions of grief, arising from shame and fear of hell, in the latest moments of life; when through long and inveterate habits of vice they are unqualified for the reception of those blessings.

IV. Let us therefore be prevail'd upon by this discourse, faithfully to endeavour by frequent and fixed meditation upon the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom, and the celestial joys it sets before us, to gain an ascendant over the world, and be superior to interested and ambitious views. Let us take care that we do not raise positive duties above moral, which are of eternal and immutable obligation, and the end of true religion. And yet let us be careful to observe, whatever bears the stamp of divine authority. Let us not insolently make a religion for God, but receive it as he has delivered it to us by reason and revelation; nor tamely take one from uninspired and fallible men. Whenever we are inquiring into the character of a true Christian, let us take the descriptions which are laid down by Christ and his apostles, such as: * *The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-*

* Gal. V. 22.

suffering,

suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith [or fidelity] meekness, temperance, and the like. Whenever any doctrine is propos'd to us, let us diligently consider it's tendency to promote true piety, humility, and virtue, or the contrary; and remember that pure Christianity forbids all pretention to dominion over the faith of others, and is a doctrine according to godliness. Let us never desire to be entertain'd rather with smooth, than right things; and especially let us carefully guard against every criminal bias; that when a subtle priest comes, he may find nothing in us.

I shall conclude this discourse with two passages of scripture, the one taken out of the Old, the other from the New Testament. The first is: * *Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, amend your ways, and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place. Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these. For if ye thoroughly amend your ways, and your doings; if you thoroughly execute judgement between a man and his neighbour; if ye oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not in-*

* Jer. VII. 3, — 10.

nocent blood in this place, neither walk after other Gods, to your hurt: then will I cause you to dwell in this place. Behold, ye trust in lying words, that cannot profit. Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other Gods, whom ye know not, and come and stand before me in this house, which is call'd by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations. The second is: * And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity. If ye do these things, ye shall never fall. For so an entrance shall be ministred unto you abundantly, into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

* 2 Pet. I. 5, 6. &c.

F I N I S.



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